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TAGS: [KIRF](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: DWINDLING SABAEAN-MANDAEAN COMMUNITY VICTIMIZED BY
CRIME, GOI INDIFFERENCE

REF: BAGHDAD 3222

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Steve Walker for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Zahroon Toma, Sabaeen-Mandaean Representative in the Non-Muslim Endowments Office, told Poloff on October 5 that he holds out no hope that the killers of several members of a Mandaean family will ever be caught, much less brought to justice. The Ministry of the Interior (MoI) is investigating the mid-September murders of a goldsmith, his eight-year old son, and the father's brother in Baghdad's Al-Sha'b neighborhood. Toma expects the results will be the same as for other such investigations: the perpetrators will remain unidentified and the file will soon be shelved. Toma told Poloff that malicious prejudice against Mandaeans resurfaced after 2003 when Muslim extremists dug out an obscure, second century A.H. fatwa which brands the ancient Mandaean faith as not one of the revealed religions (Islam, Christianity, Judaism). He said hostility toward Mandaeans among the general public has increased since then. For example, Toma asserted that a few weeks ago the Governor of Diwaniyah province refused to receive a delegation of Mandaeans.

¶2. (C) According to Toma, Mandaeans were much safer during the Saddam era, but only because they often paid protection money to corrupt officials. Now they suffer even more from the general lawlessness than the rest of the population because they are scattered throughout Iraq in small numbers and have no militias to protect or avenge them. In addition, Mandaeans are by tradition goldsmiths; kidnapping them for ransom, or looting their shops and killing them for good measure occurs relatively frequently. To counter crime against Sabaeen-Mandaeans, Toma suggested establishing a Minorities Protection Council one of whose tasks would be to investigate such crimes with the support the Council of Ministers (CoM) and the MoI, and in collaboration with United Nations human rights bodies.

¶3. (C) Toma estimates that two or three Mandaean families leave Iraq every month for Syria and Jordan, hoping eventually to reach Europe or the U.S. According to Toma, Mandaeans are as upset as the rest of Iraq's minorities over the exclusion of Article 50 from the Provincial Election Law (PEL) passed on September 24. While Mandaeans were not included in the minority quota allocations specified in Article 50, he believes they should be granted one seat on provincial councils in Baghdad, Nasiriyah, Basrah, and Amarah (Maysan), where the largest concentrations of Sabaeen-Mandaean families live. Toma stressed that Mandaeans do not want to join political parties; they are generally apolitical and only want to live in peace and security and enjoy the same rights as other Iraqis.

¶4. (C) Comment: Given the current media focus on minority rights and representation in conjunction with efforts to reinstate Article 50 in the PEL, the time seems right for to the Mandaeans to speak up for their political rights. CoR Speaker Mashadani recently mentioned that the CoR is considering creating an appointed seat for the Mandaeans in

Amarah, since their numbers do not reach the threshold required to be allocated one in the quota system (reftel). Following this logic, they are also entitled to an appointed seat in Baghdad, where the Mandaean population is even larger. According to Toma, there are 350 Mandaean families in Maysan and at least a thousand in Baghdad. We have requested an appointment with the Minister of Human Rights to convey Toma's idea for creation of a Minorities Protection Council.

CROCKER